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A BOTANICAL EXCURSION TO THE CHIMGAN VALLEY IN CENTRAL ASIA, U.S.S.R.

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ABSTRACT

The Chimgan Valley located at a distance of about 100 kms. from Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan S.S.R. is floristically very interesting. The valley is scattered with trees of *Juniperus seravschanica* Kom. and the herbaceous vegetation is rich. Many of the genera met with in the valley are also represented in the mountain flora of India, particularly of the western Himalayas and were thus of considerable interest. The paper includes a list of species collected during the excursion.

During a recent visit to the Soviet Union with a Delegation of Indian Botanists, the author had the opportunity of making collection of wild plants in a number of floristically interesting areas of which the visit to Chimgan Valley was most fascinating and rewarding. The Chimgan Valley lies at a distance of about 100 kms. from Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan S.S.R., approximately at about 42°N. and 70°E. in the neighbourhood of the intersection of the three Central Asian Republics of U.S.S.R., viz., Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kirgizia. The valley is sheltered by the Great Chimgan mountain range of the Cretaceous age and in the far background lie the Karatov Mountains. The highest peak in the neighbourhood of the Valley is about 2500 metres above s.l. The drive to the Valley from Tashkent was interesting with the road passing through cotton fields and apple orchards and along the Chir-Chik river, a tributary of the Syr-Darya river. Along roadside have been planted Poplars, Willows and Mulberry trees. At the town of Khodzhakent, there is a very big tree of *Platanus orientalis* which is believed to be 800 years old. Approaching the Valley, the road becomes very rugged and the Valley itself was intensely cold at the time of our visit with a chill breeze blowing all the time. Scattered trees of *Juniperus seravschanica* were seen on the slopes (Fig. 1). This is one of the three native Junipers of Central Asia, the other two being, *J. semiglobosa* and *J. turkestanica*. *J. seravschanica* is a very slow growing tree and trees which were said to be 200 years old had attained a height of only 6 to 8 metres. Among the woody shrubs of the valley, *Cotoneaster* spp. were forming rigid spreading mats and conspicuous by their red fruits. There were numerous herbs of which the most abundant was *Achillea filipendulina* which had already fruited. It was late autumn in the valley and most of the plants had fruited and the annuals were all dying out. There are many Umbellifers in Central Asia, particularly, of the genera *Ferula, Prangos, Schrenkia* etc., and we saw some of them in the valley. *Astragalus sieversianus* with its cottony pods and *Eremostachys speciosa,* also with cottony inflorescences attracted our attention. Species of *Ziziphora, Hypericum, Hedysarum, Tanacetum, Tragopogon, Dipsacus, Scabiosa* and others were also represented in the herbaceous flora of the valley. The monocotyledonous species included *Allium borszczowi, Ungernia sieversiana, Tulipa* sp. and *Iris sogdiana.* The specimens collected during the excursion were identified with the kind help of Prof. Vvedensky of the University of Tashkent who is an authority on the Central Asian Flora. These specimens will be incorporated in the Central National Herbarium, Calcutta and the Northern Circle Herbarium of the Botanical Survey of India at present located in Dehra Dun.

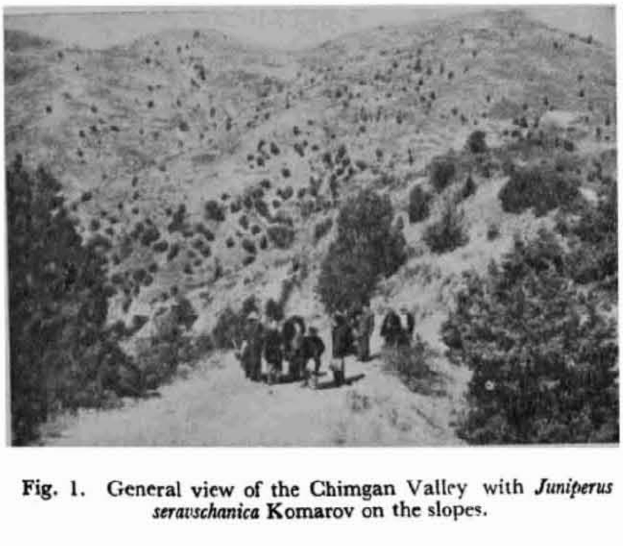

Fig. 1. General view of the Chimgan Valley with *Juniperus seravschanica* Komarov on the slopes.

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LIST OF PLANTS COLLECTED IN THE CHIMGAN VALLEY

Achillea filipendulina Lam. (Compositae)
Agropyron trichophorum C. Richt. (Gramineae)
Allium borszczowi Regel (Liliaceae)
Anaphalis velutina Krasch. (Compositae)
Astragalus sewertzowii Bunge (Leguminosae)
Astragalus sieversianus Pall. (Leguminosae)
Atraphaxis pyrifolia Bunge (Polygonaceae)
Berberis oblonga Schneid. (Berberidaceae)
Centaurea squarrosa Roth (Compositae)
Cicer flexuosum Lipsky (Leguminosae)
Chondrilla juncea Linn. (Compositae)
Clematis orientalis Linn. (Ranunculaceae)
Cotoneaster spp. (2) (Rosaceae)
Crataegus sp. (Rosaceae)
Dianthus ugamicus Vved. (Caryophyllaceae)
Dipsacus azureus Schrenk (Dipsacaceae)
Dracocephalum integrifolium Bunge (Labiatae)
Echinops karatavicus Regel et Schm. (Compositae)
Echium italicum Linn. (Boraginaceae)
Equisetum ramosissimum Desf. (Equisetaceae)
Eremostachys speciosa Rupr. (Labiatae)
Euphorbia jaxartica Prokh. (Euphorbiaceae)
Ferula tschimganica Lipsky (Umbelliferae)
Galatella chromopappa Novopokr. (Compositae)
Galium pamiralaicum Pobed. (Rubiaceae)
Gentiana olivieri Griseb. (Gentianaceae)
Hedysarum sp. (Leguminosae)
Helichrysum maracandicum M. Pop. (Compositae)
Hypericum scabrum Linn. (Hypericaceae)
Iris sogdiana Bunge (Iridaceae)
Juniperus seravschanica Komarov (Pinaceae)
Leptorhabdos parviflora Benth. (Scrophulariaceae)
Linaria popovii Kuprian. (Scrophulariaceae)
Lonicera altmannii Regel et Schm. (Caprifoliaceae)
Prangos pabularia Lindl. (Umbelliferae)
Pseudolinosyris grimmii Novopokr. (Compositae)
Rosa fedtschenkoana Regel (Rosaceae)
Schrenkia golickiana (Regel et Schm.) B. Fedtch. (Umbelliferae)
Sorbus persica Hedl. (Rosaceae)
Taraxacum montanum (C.A. Mey.) DC. (Compositae)
Tulipa sp. (Liliaceae)
Ungernia sewerzowii B. Fedtsch. (Amaryllidaceae)
Ziziphora pedicellata Pasij et Vved. (Labiatae)